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U.S. Embassy launches Academy for Women Entrepreneurs in Mauritius in partnership with AMFCE

- **The Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Startup Challenge 2021 is the first program of its kind to be implemented in Mauritius**
- **This one-year program will enroll 25 women entrepreneurs from Mauritius and Rodrigues in the DreamBuilder program**

The Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), established in the United States in 2019 by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, has been launched in Mauritius.

AWE provides women entrepreneurs with the skills, resources, and networks needed to start and scale successful businesses. Through AWE, women entrepreneurs participate in a facilitated entrepreneurship program supplemented with localized content, as well as networking and mentorship opportunities. AWE is centered around the online training program, DreamBuilder, developed through a partnership between Arizona State University's Thunderbird School of Global Management and global copper mining company Freeport-McMoRan. The program equips women with the tools needed to create and grow their own businesses, raise capital, and effectively network with other successful business owners.

In Mauritius, the U.S. Embassy has partnered with the Association Mauricienne des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises (AMFCE), the island's leading women entrepreneurs organization. The AMFCE will be implementing the first Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Startup Challenge 2021, based on the online training program, DreamBuilder developed by the Arizona State University. This one-year program will enroll 25 women entrepreneurs from Mauritius and Rodrigues. The collaboration with the U.S. Embassy also bears testimony to the credibility of the AMFCE in society and the fundamental role it plays in empowering women entrepreneurs in Mauritius.

Judes E. DeBaere, Chargée d'Affaires U.S. Embassy Mauritius and Seychelles, states: *"The United States is committed to policies that rest on a foundation of dignity and equity for women. When women are economically empowered, they re-invest in their families and communities, producing a multiplier effect that spurs additional economic growth. The U.S. Embassy is proud to support women entrepreneurs through the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE). The DreamBuilder program is implemented in partnership with the AMFCE who will connect participants with an individual mentor. AWE provides the tools and network for women entrepreneurs who are re-entering the workforce or changing careers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, more than ever, it is critically important to ensure women are afforded every opportunity to contribute to the rebuilding of the local and global economy."*



Rima Ramsaran, the AMFCE president, outline the importance of this program: *“One of our primary missions is to foster an entrepreneurship culture amongst women generally. The AWE Startup Challenge 2021 project fits in perfectly within this mission. Not only is AWE helping us promote the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship, but the collaboration with the US-Embassy is also enabling us to create and develop a sustainable eco-system that will only serve the fundamental mission we’ve embarked upon, which is to accompany and support women in their entrepreneurial journey.”*

The AMFCE has started recruiting both startups and established entrepreneurs to act as mentors for the enrolled participants. The AMFCE President is confident that AWE will provide the necessary tool for the re-skilling and redeployment of the female workforce, into entrepreneurship.

The AWE Start-Up Challenge is designed around the following key parameters:

- Participation in the program for the emerging women entrepreneurs is **free**;
- The duration of the program is 12 months and consists of comprehensive knowledge-transfer components through a series of workshops, one-to-one exchanges and regular networking.

To be eligible, the participants:

- Should have a business idea that they want to develop
- Should be driven by the desire – and willingness – to start and develop a business.
- Should be fluent in English; IT-literate; and have a convenient access to Internet.

The program is also open to women in the informal sector who want to formalize their enterprises.

The 25 participants will be paired with mentors – established entrepreneurs – who will guide them through their journey. The AMFCE is also inviting mentors to apply for this program.

The following criteria must be met before an applicant can become a mentor:

- A good business leader, professional or entrepreneur, with a minimum experience of 5 years in operating a business
- Entrepreneurs willing to share their knowledge and experience to empower start-ups
- Ready to embark on a life-changing relationship and join a vibrant entrepreneurial community.

The AMFCE has solid experience in helping Mauritian women in their entrepreneurial journey. Rima Ramsaran states: *“We would like to highlight that AMFCE has launched the Business Without Borders (BWB) last year, a capacity-building cum mentoring program aimed at building resilience in the Covid situation. BWB focused on existing women entrepreneurs who already have a*



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business and who have been hit hard by the Covid. With AWE, we are now closing the loop; BWB and AWE feed into each other thereby enabling AMFCE to develop the required framework to support women entrepreneurs from the initial stages of creation of the business to the sustenance of their business activity overtime.”

To enroll in the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Startup Challenge 2021 as an aspiring entrepreneur or as mentor, send an email to mentoring@amfce.com or visit <https://amfce.com/awe-startup-challenge/> for more details.

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